

Drying Gourds

Do you want to save some of the gourds you grew this year? Here is the best way to dry them. Harvest gourds when the vine and stem dries and begins to turn brown. Be sure to complete your harvest before the first hard frost. Immature gourds will not cure correctly and rot, so only harvest mature fruit.

After harvest, wash the fruit in a mild bleach solution and dry off with a soft cloth. Discard any bruised, diseased or damaged fruit. To dry, place gourds on slatted trays or chicken wire fencing. Make sure they do not touch each other and are located in a warm, dry, well-ventilated location.

Curing can take one to six months, depending on the type of gourd. The outer skin hardens in one or two weeks, while the internal drying takes at least an additional month. Poke a small hole in the blossom end of the gourd to quicken internal drying. Occasionally turn the fruits, checking for uneven drying or soft spots. When you shake the gourd and hear the seeds rattling, it is cured and ready for a coat of paint or varnish if desired.

—Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate



Start Garden Cleanup

Mary Jane Frogge
UNL Extension Associate

Now that the end of the growing season is near, it is time to do the garden cleanup work. While this chore may not be a priority, it is important to mention the disease and insect prevention purpose of this task. The hours and labor spent now may be more than paid back by fewer problems in the next growing season.

The garden cleanup really has four parts: complete removal of old garden plants

that have had disease or insects, searching for and removal of all rotten or diseased fruits that may have fallen, turning back into the soil all crop residue from plants that have been harvested but did not die from diseases or pests and mixing all organic mulches from garden areas where it is no longer needed. Trellises and stakes no longer needed can be taken out, cleaned and stored for next year.

Some gardeners may leave this cleanup for the whole garden until the last fall vegetable has been harvested

or, worse yet, until just before next spring's planting. It is a good idea to clean up each garden area when it is finished, even though other parts of the garden are still producing fall crops.

Crop residues from healthy plants are a valuable source of organic matter, which most of our soils need. This term is used for all portions of plants left over after harvest: stems, stubble, mulch and root residues. These materials can be cut up and put on your compost pile.

Tree Planting and Landscape Improvement Funds Available

Tree planting and landscape enhancements for public spaces can get a boost from a grant program coordinated by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and Nebraska Forest Service, both based at University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

The Nebraska Community Enhancement Program funds tree planting and landscaping that improves the state's transportation corridors, including public streets, highways, entryways and trails. This can involve areas along parks, schools, fairgrounds, college campuses, libraries, courthouses, hospitals, welcome signs and other public properties. Tree planting is an especially important component of this program although shrubs and herbaceous plantings are also eligible.

The Community Enhancement Program is funded by the Transportation Enhancement Program of the Nebraska Department of Roads. It is an 80/20 percent matching grant program with a maximum funding award of \$20,000 per project. The application dead-



Lincoln Water System received a 2000 Community Enhancement Program grant for the Waterwise Landscaping Project along North 27th Street.

line is Nov. 16, with funding awards announced by January 2008.

Since 1996 the Community Enhancement Program has awarded over \$3.5 million in landscaping grants to over 530

projects in communities all across Nebraska.

For more information about this grant program and/or for an application, go to <http://arboretum.unl.edu> or call Sue Kohles at 472-2971.

Grassland Center Sets Fall Lecture Schedule

The 13th annual fall seminar series offered by the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Center for Grassland Studies will feature faculty and guest lecturers on topics ranging from Nebraska's Tallgrass Prairie to Wild Life in South Africa.

The seminars are free and open to the public. They are held most Mondays during the fall semester, 3–4 p.m., at the UNL's East Campus Union. A partial schedule is listed here:

- Oct. 8** – Marian Langan, director, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, Nebraska's Tallgrass Prairie: History or Legacy
- Oct. 29** – Bruce Anderson, agronomy and horticulture, UNL, Forage Issues in Mainland China.
- Nov. 12** – Jim Stubbendieck, agronomy and horticulture director, Center for Great Plains Studies, UNL, Experiences with Wildlife in South Africa.

Nov. 19 – Brad Jakubowski, agronomy and horticulture, UNL, Opportunities in Sports Turf Management.

Nov. 26 – Luciana Toda, graduate student, entomology, UNL, Buffalograss Resistance to the Chinch Bug.

Dec. 3 – Larkin Powell, School of Natural Resources, UNL, Effects of Grassland Management on Upland Game Bird Production.

Dec. 10 – Neal Bryan, graduate student, agronomy and horticulture, UNL, Grassland to Woodland Transitions: Nebraska and the World.

The above schedule is subject to revision. Changes will be noted at www.grassland.unl.edu. Videos of the seminars will be available at the Center for Grassland Studies reference center. For more information, e-mail grassland@unl.edu or call 472-4101.

Sign Up for Free E-mail Horticulture Newsletter

HortUpdate is a FREE e-mail newsletter from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension which provides timely information to the lawn and landscape industry. This e-mail includes current lawn and landscape problems with control recommendations and a seasonal 'To Do' list. To subscribe, go to <http://extensionhorticulture.unl.edu>



Garden Guide

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

Plant spring flowering bulbs.

Cut down stems and foliage of herbaceous perennials after two or three hard frosts and when leaves begin to brown.

Fall is the time to control broadleaf weeds in the lawn, such as white clover, dandelion and ground ivy.

Dig and bring in cannas, dahlias and gladiolus. Dry, clean and store in a cool location free from frost.

After several hard frosts, add mulch to your perennial flower garden. A one-inch layer of straw or chopped leaves will help conserve soil moisture and protect the root system.

When deciding on new trees or shrubs to plant around your home, remember to select varieties that will fit the location when they are at their mature height. This will greatly reduce pruning and other maintenance in the future.

Pick bagworms from evergreen shrubs. This will eliminate the spring hatch from overwintered eggs.

Remove leaves from lawn to reduce lawn problems. Compost or shred and use them for mulch.

Make a note of any particularly productive or unsatisfactory varieties of vegetables you planted this year. Such information can be very useful when planning next year's garden.

Remove any diseased or insect-infested plant material from your garden, it may harbor overwintering stages of disease or insect pests. If you leave this plant material in your garden, you are leaving diseases and insects which will begin to reproduce again next spring and add to next year's pest problem.

Cure pumpkins, butternut and hubbard squash at temperatures between 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit for two or three weeks immediately after harvest. After curing, store them in a dry place at 55 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

Use dried herbs to make fragrant wreaths and dried flower arrangements.

Clean-up the orchard and small fruit plantings. Sanitation is essential for good maintenance. Dried fruits or mummies carry disease organisms through the winter to attack next year's crop.

Nut trees are a fine addition to the home landscape. They may accent the house, provide shade in the summer and even become a food source.

Christmas cactus need special care now to get its beautiful flowers this December. Buds will form at 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit or if the plant is exposed to at least 13 hours of complete darkness each night.

Fall is an excellent time for taking soil samples in your lawn and garden. Soil tests will measure the pH of the soil, organic matter content and the levels of some of the major elements required for plant growth, such as phosphorus and potassium.